

THE MOST WONDERFUL

Dan Patch never lost a race. But that's not how he made his owner a multi-millionaire. America's best-loved horse was also perhaps the most shrewdly marketed animal of all time.
by D. R. Martin

In mid-September 1904 Americans reading about Teddy Roosevelt's conquest of the Republican presidential convention and the decisive Japanese victory over the Russians at Liao-yang came across a brief news item from Kansas: Dan Patch had taken ill in Topeka and would probably die. The announcement sent tremors of anticipatory grief not only through horse fanciers and turf followers but through millions of people who had no particular interest in the track. In the first decade of the century, almost any American could tell you that Dan Patch was no ordinary horse, not even an ordinary champion. He was a harness racer, a pacing horse that never lost a race, an opponent so formidable that after he had spent just two years on the Grand Circuit (the major league of harness racing), owners gave up pitting their pacers against him. Dan Patch paced only against the clock, before several million paying spectators at state fairs. His owner, M. W. ("Will") Savage—a man of personal, if not commercial, circumspection called him "The Equine King of All Harness Horse Creation and the World's Great Champion of All Champions."

Dan had already appeared that season of 1904 at fairs in Indianapolis, Des Moines, Lincoln, and Milwaukee and had been booked to pace an exhibition mile at the Kansas State Fair. He arrived, as usual, in his private equine Pullman car, with his driver, Harry Hersey, his caretakers, his run-nine pacemakers, and their drivers and was billeted in the best stable on the fairgrounds. But the day of his exhibition the mahogany bay stallion suddenly came down with colic, which could kill a horse in a matter of hours.

Will Savage got the bad news in Omaha; he commissioned the top veterinarians in the Midwest to head for Dan's stall, then chartered his own special train to Topeka. By the time he arrived on the fairgrounds, newspaper reporters had set up their death watch outside the stable. Inside, the vets on the scene had all but given up. Harry Hersey, who'd just begun driving Dan that season, told the Minneapolis *Journal*, "Dan has no chance on earth."

Savage didn't believe it. He went into the stall alone and assayed his stallion's condition. He was an expert horseman, with a large stable of fine harness racers back in Minneapolis, and he knew as much about horses as many vets. The millionaire feed merchant took from his pocket a vial of his own International Colic Cure ("The only Colic Cure sold with a Cash Guarantee"), called in some handlers and vets to help persuade Dan to take it, and then asked to be left alone with the horse. He sat down on the stable floor, put Dan's head on his lap, petted him, whispered to him, talked to him, and—devout Methodist that he was—prayed.

Savage stayed with Dan all through the night, while the vets, the handlers, and the reporters waited outside. After dawn one of the handlers summoned up his courage, tiptoed into the stall, and a few seconds later came back out, beaming. "Anyone know where we can get some apples?" he asked.

In Minneapolis, the horse's hometown, the *Journal* had given over its front page to the headline DAN PATCH, KING OF PACERS, IS DOOMED TO EARLY DEATH. Early that afternoon Savage telegraphed home, letting Minneapolis know that the king of pacers was much better. "This news," the *Journal* said, "will carry general cheer thruout the turf world." Dan recovered so rapidly, in fact, that he was out pacing only a few days later and was back on the exhibition circuit in October.

That's the way it always went between Dan Patch and Will Savage. The millionaire and the horse did each other proud again and again during their fourteen-year collaboration. They were compatriots as much as a man and an animal could be; they were partners. It's safe to say that without Dan Patch, Will Savage would never have been the success he was, and without Will Savage, Dan Patch would have been nothing more than another good turn-of-the-century pacer. "There was something uncanny, almost supernatural, about their relationship," Savage's son Harold recalled in the 1960s, "from the moment they met until the end."

When an Oxford, Indiana, store-keeper named Dan Messner, Jr., paid the outlandish fee of \$150 to have a broken-down mare called Zelica bred to a champion pacer named Joe Patchen, yet untested as a stud, his friends and fellow horsemen thought he'd taken leave of his senses. And when the colt was foaled in April 1896, Messner probably agreed with them. Little Dan Patch—"Dan" for himself, "Patch" for his sire—just

didn't look like a horse with potential. His knees were too knobby, his legs too long, his hocks curved. And unlike his ill-tempered sire, he actually seemed fond of people right from the start, a bad sign in a racehorse.

"I thought all he would be good for would be hauling a delivery wagon," Messner said years later. "Fortunately, Johnny Wattles, a livery-stable proprietor of Oxford, saw possibilities in Dan as he began to mature. He asked me to turn the colt over to him for training purposes."

The first two times Wattles harnessed Dan to a racing sulky the horse kicked out the spokes of the left wheel. The trainer and owner wondered if his sire's temper wasn't coming out after all. It was Wattles who figured out the cause of the seeming violence: at full stride, Dan's crooked left hock threw his hoof out too far to the side. Henceforward he pulled custom sulkies with axles eight inches longer than standard, and with a wooden rim on the left wheel, so he would do himself no harm if he happened to kick it.

Once the sulky problem was solved, Dan scarcely needed coaching on his pacing gait. (When a horse trots, the legs on either side move in opposite directions; when it paces, the legs on either side move in the same direction. In turf parlance, pacers are side-wheelers.) Dan required neither hobbles—a kind of equine suspenders used to promote the pacing gait—nor blinders. He was a natural-born pacer.

"Wattles worked wonders with the colt," Messner said, "but even under Johnny's careful tutoring, Dan was four years old before I thought he was worth entrance fees in a race. Dan quickly convinced me I was wrong in my judgment by winning a dozen races in fairly fast company.

"It was then that [M. E.] Sturgis offered me \$20,000 for Dan, and I grabbed it."

Sturgis, a professional gambler from Buffalo, New York, owned Dan through the remainder of his brief, amazing, competitive career. Dan started in fifty-six qualifying heats and failed to finish first in only two, and then because of faulty driving strategies. He won nineteen races altogether, with no defeats. When other horse owners refused to race against Dan, and track owners objected to the dearth of betting when he appeared on a racing form, Sturgis and Myron McHenry (the premier sulky driver of the day) pitted Dan against the clock. It was a profitable decision: all fourteen of his 1902 exhibitions drew huge crowds.

Throughout that season the trainers and drivers, the touts and stable hangers-on noticed that wherever Dan appeared, an unassuming gentleman in a frock coat and black derby was sure to be in attendance, with stopwatch in hand. He was ramrod straight and taciturn and had no interest in gambler's tips, so everyone took to calling him the parson.

The parson was named Marion Willis Savage, and he astonished the horse world that December by buying Dan Patch for the awesome sum of sixty thousand dollars, twice what had ever before been paid for a racing horse, after three weeks of tough negotiation with Sturgis's representative, McHenry.

"Many of my friends," Savage wrote three years later, "threw up their hands and did not talk softly either, when, they declared that 'Savage had gone crazy,' that 'it was too bad for a man to lose his head about fast horses,' etc. They seemed to take it for granted that this was another sudden impulse, but time has proven to them that I had a purpose in view and that this purpose was the outcome of my boy dreams, and I can state positively that Dan Patch at \$60,000 was the cheapest horse I ever bought and that he paid for himself within three years and could not be purchased of me for \$180,000, which I was offered." That \$180,000 offer came from none other than M. E. Sturgis, who desperately wanted Dan Patch back.

Will Savage was born near Akron, Ohio, in 1859, with, he claimed, "a great desire to raise high-class harness horses." He grew up in Iowa, where a brief, disastrous fling at farming left him worried that he'd never get to build that harness-horse stock farm he yearned for. He tried his hand at the feed business, had some success, and in 1886 moved his enterprise north to Minneapolis. By the turn of the century Savage's International Stock Food Company ("3 Feeds for One Cent") was one of the top commercial concerns in the city, providing feeds and animal tonics to farmers and ranchers all across the Midwest.

Savage already owned a large collection of racers and retired champions when he acquired Dan as the star of his stable. Savage built his base of operations, the International Stock Food Farm at Hamilton (later Savage), on the Minnesota River, about twenty miles south of Minneapolis. It was the Waldorf-Astoria of stables, with steam heat, exceptional ventilation, and electric light. The central Taj Mahal-like dome rose 100 feet in the air, and five 155-foot wings projected from it in a 180-degree arc. At the end of one of the wings was Dan's stall, 20 feet square, with shades on the windows and monogrammed woolen blankets and hung with pictures of Dan and his triumphs. Outside was the one-mile out-door track, and connected to one of the

wings was an enclosed, steam-heated half-mile of track for winter workouts. Beyond lay 750 acres of pasture.

Once Dan was established in his luxurious new home, the world quickly learned that he owed his prowess in large part to eating International Stock Food's "3 Feeds for One Cent." In the first year of Dan's residency in Minneapolis, Savage's feed and tonic sales grew from one million to five million dollars. Long before human sports heroes were endorsing products, Dan was. You could buy Dan Patch cigars, Dan Patch watches, Dan Patch stoves, Dan Patch washing machines, Dan Patch padlocks, Dan Patch sleds, Dan Patch coaster wagons, Dan Patch collars, Dan Patch dance music, even Dan Patch automobiles. And in later years you could ride on Savage's Dan Patch Railroad from Minneapolis to the Savage stock farm, have a look at Dan, then continue on south to Northfield.

Savage used advertising as effectively as anyone in the country. His campaigns for Dan Patch Day exhibitions at state fairs were models of high-powered saturation promotion. "For weeks in advance of the event," Savage's son Harold recalled, "local papers and county or rural sheets for miles around carried a constant stream of Dan Patch pictures and publicity. In addition, wagons owned and operated by M. W. Savage would canvass the territory, decorating every conspicuous building, fence, wall or billboard space available with huge posters of Dan—and his 'company.' ... The merits of '3 Feeds for One Cent' were invariably described. ...

"Every one of these advance wagons was always a word-of-mouth gospel-spreader for Dan Patch. Wherever and whenever one of them stopped, people were encouraged to gather and hear, first hand, of 'the most wonderful horse in the world.' "

In later years, when Dan Patch was retired to stud, Savage wouldn't merely sell a customer a two-year-old Dan Patch stallion colt. The purchase price included the hoopla to go with the horse. "I have spent a great many years and a lot of money learning how to advertise successfully," he wrote his prospects, "and I propose to let you have the benefit of it by giving the Printed Material for your Stallion my personal attention. I will give you the kind of advertising that *gets the business.*"

Savage never negotiated for a flat fee for Dan's fairground appearances but demanded a percentage of the gate receipts instead. "His favorite method," said his son, "was to agree upon a date for the appearance, and then to contract either for a given percentage of the paid admission, or else for the excess amount of gate receipts over the same day for the previous season—or, say, the record sum for that day, on the [fair] association's books."

At opening time on Dan Patch Day, every grandstand ticket seller on the fairgrounds had company—a Savage employee standing at his shoulder, counting the receipts. When the ticket sales were tallied—Dan customarily drew grandstand crowds of upward of thirty and forty thousand—the fair managers were often shocked at what they owed Savaee. One fair discovered that the Minneapolis millionaire was due \$21,500.

Dan Patch regularly drew crowds of forty thousand; one fair manager was shocked to discover he owed Savage \$21,500 at day's end.

In Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, the con man Harold Hill asks the upright citizens of River City, Iowa, in 1912, "Like to see some stuck-up jockey boy settin' on Dan Patch? Make your blood boil? Well, I should say." That about summed up rural and small-town America's attitude toward Thoroughbred racing. Boys and men still raced their light-harness rigs—the hot rods of the day—down country roads, and automobiles were a mildly threatening novelty. The horse was still king, and Dan Patch was the paragon of horses.

He was a big horse, 16.2 hands high, trim-limbed and mahogany brown. He had a white star in the center of his forehead and eyes that were called "keenly intelligent." The crooked left hock was rarely mentioned.

One anonymous turf journalist first saw Dan Patch early in the horse's career. "The impression that he instantly made upon me was the profound one that only a very great horse can produce. He stood quietly amid the throng pressing around him as if oblivious of its presence, with an expression of innate power, of tremendous but unostentatious individual force such as, I suppose, Daniel Webster among men, must have possessed. Instinctively, as I gazed at him, I felt that this horse merely in repose surpassed all the expectations I had formed of what he might be in action."

"He was 'Black Beauty' come to life," said the Minneapolis sportswriter George Barton. "Most racing stallions are ill-tempered but Dan was as gentle as a Newfoundland or Saint Bernard dog. He was remarkably intelligent and almost human in his fondness for people—young and old alike. He seemed to understand everything said to him..."

"Jogging down the track past the stands after an exhibition against time, Dan had a way of nodding his head toward the spectators as if acknowledging the cheers of his public."

When souvenir hunters yanked hairs out of Dan's tail, the stallion didn't flinch. When bands played—a common occurrence on Dan Patch Days—he seemed to actually savor the sound. One winter Dan was in residence in the barn behind Savage's home near downtown Minneapolis when it caught fire. "Dan was led out with fire and smoke on both sides," said Harold Savage, "and it didn't seem to bother him a bit. He was calmer than anyone."

"He is just the best dispositioned fellow in the world," Myron McHenry said in 1902. "He never gets the blues nor loses his temper... I have driven him in the most noisy parts of New York, amidst the rumbling of cable cars and elevated railways, and I never saw him make the slightest movement of a muscle in fear or alarm. A child could drive that horse."

And Harold Savage was the lucky child who did. Until his death in 1977 Will Savage's younger son loved to tell the story of Dan being hitched to a cutter on Christmas Eve, with Harold driving the pacer around the deserted, snowy city streets, delivering presents. "I remember the candles in each window," he said, "and how the children would run out and follow Dan and me."

Dan had fans who were famous themselves, or would be: Lillie Langtry once arranged to have her personal railroad car stop close to Dan's, so she could walk over and visit the champion. A young Missouri boy named Harry Truman wrote Dan a fan letter, and Dwight Eisenhower went to see him pace at the Kansas State Fair.

Dan took special notice of photographers. "Every time you pointed a camera at him," recalled the Minneapolis photographer George Luxton, "he seemed to sense that he should look pretty. In fact, it was almost impossible to get a profile of him. Finally, I got Harry Hersey ... to stand out in front and call Dan by name. When Dan would look at [Hersey], I'd snap the picture."

"To the men who have studied and known him during his life," wrote Merton E. Harrison in the introduction to his *Autobiography of Dan Patch*, "it seems that his intelligence must be almost human. ... The work of his caretakers, trainers, and drivers has always been high class, but it has always been supplemented by the self-esteem, care and thoughtfulness of the horse himself. Dan Patch has come to be spoken of as 'the horse that knows.'"

Myron McHenry was the best sulky driver in the country, but that didn't stop Will Savage from firing him at the end of the 1903 season. The driver had complained publicly about Dan's being turned into an advertisement icon, the centerpiece of what he called Savage's "circus." For his part, the teetotaling Savage didn't approve of McHenry's drinking and associates. (Anyone who went to work at Savage's stock farm had to swear to his personal sobriety and his abhorrence of unclean language. If an employee was heard to have had alcohol or to have been cursing, even off duty, he was promptly discharged.)

Savage immediately put his trainer Harry Hersey in Dan's driver's seat. Hersey didn't let Savage down; he drove Dan through one record after another, including a stellar world-record 1:55¹/₄ mile in Lexington in 1905. But many turf experts, and ordinary people, speculated that Dan would have done even better with McHenry.

"This I can say for [Hersey]," wrote Harrison in the peculiar and engaging "autobiography" in which the newspaperman spoke as Dan himself. "He was industrious and his theory and work in preparing me were masterful. He never asked of me more than I was physically fit to do. But when it came to driving me almost any one could have done as well. I never felt the love for him that was inspired by my first driver [Johnny Wattles] nor the confidence in his ability and courage that I felt when McHenry was up behind me. Perhaps I am an egotist but I have always resented the oft-repeated statement that 'Hersey made Dan Patch.' My honest opinion is that Dan Patch made Hersey."

Nevertheless, the exhibition Dan and Hersey put on at the Minnesota State Fair on September 8, 1906, was extraordinary, the "I-was-there" brag of a whole generation of Midwesterners. Dan had arrived on the fairgrounds at Hamline, north of St. Paul, the weekend before the fair opened, but Hersey didn't allow the

public in to look at him before his exhibition mile on Monday, the third. That afternoon Dan came out before the forty thousand plus spectators and paced a mile that for another horse would have been a miracle, but for him was merely workaday—1:56½. Everyone was happy to see him set a new fair record, but there had to have been some disappointment at his time. So fair officials exercised their option of having Dan appear a second time, on Saturday. At midweek ads appeared in the local papers:

*Can Dan Patch Break the World Record?
Saturday P.M.
3 to 4 o'Clock
at the Minnesota State Fair
Special Notice*

The track will be better, Dan will be faster and Mr. Savage promises that every possible effort will be made to break the world's record of 1:55Vi on Saturday afternoon. Dan will pace three miles and his fastest mile will be about 4 o'clock. If you want to see a thrilling sight and witness a wonderful performance be sure and visit the great State Fair on Saturday.

Savage's hardworking publicists subsequently claimed a crowd of ninety-three thousand that Saturday, a figure that has entered Dan Patch mythology. In fact, ninety-degree temperatures kept the attendance to between twenty and thirty thousand. But the heat wave had also made for a very fast track.

Because Dan needed the semblance of competition to produce his best times, he always performed his exhibitions with at least two other horses on the track. These pacemakers or prompters were gallopers hitched to sulkies; pacers or trotters couldn't hope to stay close to Dan, let alone get in front of him. One prompter would run ahead of him, and one at his side, while sometimes a third horse waited at the three-quarter-mile post, ready to leap in and add urgency to the affair. Dan at times actually put his nose into the back of the front pacemaker's driver, even though that horse was at full gallop. To protect Dan from dirt and stones, the front pacemaker's sulky had a dirt shield rigged between the wheels.

“He is just the best dispositioned fellow in the world,” said one driver of Dan. “He never gets the blues nor loses his temper.”

A Minneapolis *Journal* reporter named John Ritchie described the third mile that Dan paced the afternoon of September 8, after two warm-up miles: 'The trio came down the stretch in a swirling cloud of dust, a seeming incarnation of the spirit of speed. The thumping of the hoofs of the runners intermingling with the regular tattoo of those of the splendid pacer were the only sounds heard as the compact squadron of record breakers swept by the judges' stand.

“The watches clicked and the assault upon the world's record was on. The leading runner was down to hard going when the trio passed under the wire, and Dean [driver of the front pacemaker] gave him no peace. He was eating up the ground in mighty bounds, with Dan, his nose almost against Dean's shoulders, pacing in a style more suggestive of a machine than the effort of a thing of flesh and blood. His great stride was equal to the leaps of the runner and he could not be shaken off. ... The second runner, traveling the far distance, was struggling to keep up. ...

“They flashed by the quarter in :28¼ and were on for the half. Here they were traversing the most friendly portion of the track and altho in that part where speed is always optically lessened to the watcher it could be seen that they were going great guns. They reached the half in :57 and the flag in the wigwag tower near the barns dropped to notify Dean and Hersey that they were within the work, as planned.

“On they rushed to the far corner and toward the famous 'hill.' They dropped out of sight for a moment behind the cut and when they showed again on the curve it was seen that nothing had changed. Into the head wind they came to the three-quarters and sped by the third pole with the watches stopping at 1:26½.

“Here at the corner a third runner was waiting and his driver sent him into the rush. The crowd came to its feet to a man, and the picture was the greatest ever seen on a racecourse.

“The dust clouded behind the flying horses. The sun shone thru the haze of dust and smoke, silhouetting the horses so that they formed the central point of the picture with everything else in the landscape blotted out. At first they appeared no larger than black specks in the haze, but not for long. They rushed down the

stretch, an avalanche of speed and effort. As they neared the stand, the roll of the hoofs of the horses and the cries of the drivers added a new life, transforming the panorama into a living spectacle... Dan Patch was going as easily and as freely as when scoring in the preliminary trials. His stride was as true and his reach as time-devouring as when he started the great trial.

"There was an instant of craning of necks, of riveted attention and the quartet had whirled beneath the finishing wire. The work was done."

Dan slowed, wheeled around, and came slowly back in front of the judges' stand. The judges consulted with one another, carefully checking their timings, and then the official announcer put a megaphone to his mouth: "Dan Patch has paced the mile out in 1:55 flat, breaking the world's—"

And that was as much as anyone heard through the eruption of shouting, screaming, and general hullabaloo. A hailstorm of hats flew up into the air and down again. Thousands of people made for the big stallion, while fifty policemen attempted to protect him from his fans.

Dan never paced a better mile. Savage changed the name of his International Stock Food Farm to the International 1:55 Stock Food Farm. But because the front pacemaker's sulky used a dirt shield—which had been declared illegal by harness-racing authorities in 1905, since it could also serve as a windshield—the 1:55 was never recognized as an official record. Savage bitterly opposed the new rule, claiming that it had been enacted merely through jealousy on the part of other horse owners, and he ignored it for the rest of Dan's career.

But Dan's 1:55¼ from 1905 came before the dirt-shield ruling, stood officially, and was not beaten until 1938. And no pacer bettered Billy Direct's 1938 1:55 until 1960. (Today the record stands at 1:481/5.) Unofficially, Dan Patch's 1906 1:55 was not improved upon for almost sixty years. Dan, though, did come close to doing just that, at Lexington in 1908. He whirled by the three-quarters pole at 1:25, a second and a half faster than his pace at Hamline in 1906, putting him in place for a 1:53 mile. But at the seven-eighths pole the front pacemaker, Cobweb, burst a blood vessel over his eye, wobbled, and slowed down. Mersey and Dan had to swerve to avoid a collision and in the swerving lost their 1:53 forever.

Dan's eight-year exhibition career ended in 1909, when he went lame in Los Angeles. He'd earned Will Savage more than one million dollars through the exhibitions alone and many millions more as a trademark. He went out on the road with his younger stablemates Minor Heir and George Gano for one more season, but he simply stood on display. Then he retired to stud at the International 1:55 Horse Farm in Savage.

The only area in a champion racehorse's career in which Dan Patch failed to garner much success was as a sire. Owners of the top standard-bred mares were reluctant to ship them all the way to Minnesota from the East Coast, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and none of Dan's hundred or so offspring came close to approaching his times, even though Savage's advertising made them sound like money in the bank.

Dan was more than twenty years old, and enjoying the life of an equine elder statesman, when he took ill one Friday in July of 1916. By Sunday he had seemed to recover, but Monday evening he suffered a relapse.

The next day, while a veterinarian and two care-takers stood by, Dan Patch sank to the stable floor. As he lay there on his side, he began to pace frenetically for a few seconds, just as if he were in a race. The pacing slowed, stopped, and Dan Patch was dead. He had been killed by what veterinarians called an athletic heart; the organ, twice the size of a normal horse's, was said to have been weakened by all those years of racing.

Will Savage was in no position to save his great pacer's life a second time; he was in the hospital, recovering from minor surgery, when Dan took sick. News of Dan's illness and death was initially kept from him, but finally, late Tuesday afternoon, he heard that his beloved pacer had passed away. "The shock and grief he experienced," reported the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, "were almost unbearable." But he rallied and had his son Harold tell the reporters that he intended to have Dan's body mounted and put on display. Marietta Savage was so sure of her husband's good condition that she headed home Wednesday afternoon, to the Savage country house on the bluff a mile north of the stock farm. As she drove up, servants came running out, shouting that she had to go back; Mr. Savage had taken a turn for the worse.

By the time she arrived her husband was dead, only thirty-two hours after Dan Patch. Like the horse's death, Will Savage's was attributed to heart trouble. Marietta Savage immediately ordered that Dan's carcass be returned to the farm from the taxidermy shop. There it sat in a box for several days, until two caretakers

secretly buried Dan Patch along the bank of the Minnesota River in an unmarked grave, among the remains of dozens of other horses. Mrs. Savage swore the care-takers to secrecy, and the exact location of the horse's resting place was never revealed.

Within two years Marietta Savage had sold off her husband's pacers and trotters. The farm ceased operations, and the Savage business interests—which then included mail-order catalogues, as well as the horse operation, feed sales, and the railroad—began their long decline. Where the International 1:55 Stock Food Farm stood there's now nothing but an empty field alongside a busy suburban highway.

No racing horse, not even the great Man o' War, ever enjoyed the kind of celebrity that surrounded Dan Patch for the better part of a decade. Will Savage saw more in the big mahogany bay stallion than any horseman or businessman had ever seen in any horse; harness racing was still at the pinnacle of its popularity, and Dan Patch and his owner were in their prime at the perfect moment to take advantage of it.

Dan Patch was more than twenty years old when he died in July 1916. His shocked owner survived him by only thirty-two hours.

Commenting upon the phenomenon of Dan Patch, one harness-horse magazine observed that when they came in their tens of thousands to racetracks, state fairs, and the Savage farm, "men, women and children seemed content just to see him—as if he were George Washington or Abraham Lincoln." As horses go, that is exactly what Dan Patch was.

D. R. Martin is a Minneapolis journalist with a strong interest in turn-of-the-century American history.